

Iowa Department of Human Rights

Division of Community Advocacy & Services (CAS) Strategic Plan

BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY

Iowa is in a period of concentrated change. Over the next few decades, our state, and the people who live here, will experience a significant shift. As our population ages, we will experience increased physical challenges, from hearing loss to mobility concerns. Our youth are more ethnically and racially diverse than at any time in history. There are 180 languages spoken in Iowa today, representing 180 distinct cultures and ways of life. By 2050, analysis shows that 53% of our population will be non-white.

We must direct our resources to help people reach their full potential.

We know that if we are to fulfill the potential that lies within each Iowan, CAS has an obligation to be a model and catalyst for a successful bringing together of the people of our state.

How we live, work and thrive in the future will be defined by the actions we take today. CAS is uniquely positioned to help Iowans embrace this change by creating an intentional, purposeful and coordinated program that is responsive to the needs of our state.

How do we do this?

We must shift how we do our work to create a different kind of results.

Although we are a small state, our diversity can keep us distant from one another, making our task more difficult. At the same time, CAS is also small and diverse. We have 9.5 full time equivalent staff members, each with deep connections to, and knowledge about, the needs of a specific population. With a financial resource pool that has remained constant for many years while costs have steadily increased, we are called to focus our collective efforts to achieve measurable results.

Throughout the past several months, CAS has engaged in strategic planning. This work has been done in several steps. We began by defining our goal for Iowa – asking ourselves what Iowa would look like when we could call our work done. We then completed an examination of those characteristics, commitments and requirements that are fundamental to our identity and our reason for existing. Next, we identified which of those characteristics, commitments and requirements that CAS is positioned to influence, establishing universal points of distinction and focus for our organization.

We assessed where we could produce meaningful change in both the short and long term, and identified specific ways we could measure our impact on Iowa and with the populations we serve.

This planning process has yielded the united strategic direction for the Division that we are sharing with you today.

What happens next?

Our enterprise possesses great power, and we need to harness that power to achieve the goal of an equal, just, accessible and inclusive Iowa.

| We have power in numbers – we serve Iowa's women, Latinos, African Americans, Persons with Disabilities, Asian and Pacific Islanders, Native Americans and the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing. Together, our constituents comprise the majority of Iowa's population.

- | We have the power to convene. By bringing together the organizations and people who serve our communities, and providing them with the technical and social means to enhance their connection and services to our populations, the state can gain more productivity and results from the current investment in programming.
- | Much of our power resides in our Commissions – not just in four meetings a year, or the transmission of information to and from all of you, but in the collaborative implementation of our shared strategies. Your ongoing involvement in carrying out this focused plan will allow us to reach deeper into the communities we serve and seize opportunities that are yet unimagined.

By integrating the plan for our Division’s work seamlessly with that of our Commissions, we have the opportunity to better serve each of our communities and our society. By focusing our collective attention on those strategies that we are uniquely able to impact we can “move the needle” to resolve some of the most pressing and relevant needs in our state. At the same time, we must avoid homogenization of our work – we exist to serve the distinct needs of specific populations in Iowa. We believe our plan succeeds in building a collective focus while maintaining our ability to bring a voice to the unique needs of each population we serve.

GOAL | IOWA IS EQUAL, JUST, ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE

STRATEGIES & MEASURES

- ☐ Increase civic engagement and participation
 - Number of people trained to self-advocate with state and local government
 - Number of people registered to vote
 - Number of people who do vote
 - Number of people from underrepresented populations who serve on state and local boards and commissions
- ☐ Enhance engagement with the Department of Human Rights in our communities
 - Number of people connected to DHR through social media
 - Number of people attending informational/educational sessions delivered by DHR
 - Number of members of the public who attend board and commission meetings
 - Number of publications/media accepting DHR developed features
 - Number of Iowans receiving information and referral from DHR
 - Number of Iowans receiving technical assistance from DHR
- ☐ Improve educational and leadership connections with youth
 - Number of youth in grades 6-12 who are involved in DHR initiatives
 - Number of people involved in DHR youth social media
 - Number of youth in DHR programs who achieve their educational goals
 - Number of youth in DHR programs who achieve their self-identified highest potential
 - Number of new American youth who are involved in DHR leadership programs
- ☐ Increase language and communication access
 - Number of state employees who know how to serve the Limited English Proficient (LEP), Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities
 - Number of qualified/certified interpreters available in Iowa to serve LEP, Deaf and Hard of Hearing populations
 - Number of state employees in customer service positions with necessary skills to serve diverse populations.

TEAM STRUCTURE & COMMITMENT

Until now, each of the Offices within the CAS Division has primarily worked independently to meet the needs of their specific populations. CAS Offices are structurally arranged into clusters (Status of African Americans & Latino Affairs; Status of Women and Asian & Pacific Islander Affairs; Persons with Disabilities, Deaf Services and Native American Affairs) to facilitate more “cross-office” activity. In practice, that structural arrangement alone has not brought about the connectivity that was intended.

This strategic plan creates cross-office teams around specific strategic initiatives. Office staff will work in cross-office teams to bring about measurable change in each of these key areas.

While the actions associated with this plan will be the primary focus of our work, we will not abandon population specific needs. We estimate that approximately 70% of our work will be in these focused areas in service to Asian and Pacific Islanders, African Americans, Women, Persons with Disabilities, the Deaf, Native Americans, and Latinos; and approximately 30% of our work will be in direct support of our Commissions and in areas that are not represented in this Division-wide plan, but are instead particular to one population.

ACTION PLANS

Detailed action plans are being drafted by staff in cross-office teams, and we will be seeking input from Commissioners and Stakeholders. These plans will offer a road map for our actions in three phases – six months, one year and three years.

In the action plans, you will see a broad perspective that includes more than just the specific events that we deal with on a day-to-day basis. They will attack the causes of issues and identify where we will work to address them.

The action plans will focus on leverage points - those influences within a system where small changes can effect a substantial change in the system itself.

We will also establish “learning loops” – using what we learn through the implementation of our action plans to influence the direction of future actions. Rather than a traditional action plan that plots a course that is abandoned when “reality” sets in, we will use the results of our actions to provide meaningful feedback to continually improve and refine our work.